



# Web The Second

**I**MAGINE A SECURE WEB-based platform where teachers and students can create weekly news broadcasts, make spreadsheets that provide simultaneous viewing, and even tap into real-time classrooms abroad so students can discover different

cultures and have real-time conversations with foreigners.

This is happening in a select few schools, made possible with Web 2.0 tools, or second-generation tools, including blogs, podcasts, wikis, video streaming, and interactive Web sites.

The original purpose of the Internet was to facilitate access to a large body of information that was housed in facilities around the world and not easy to get to, according to Susan Brooks-Young, a Web 2.0 consultant and former school principal and assistant principal in California's



# Tools: Generation

**The shifting landscape of Web 2.0 technologies**

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BY ANGELA PASCOPELLA

Mountain View School District, Fullerton School District and Bonita Unified School District. The Internet's intent was about accessing a collective intelligence.

Web 2.0 tools and technologies help do this. They save districts time and money and eliminate the need to transfer or

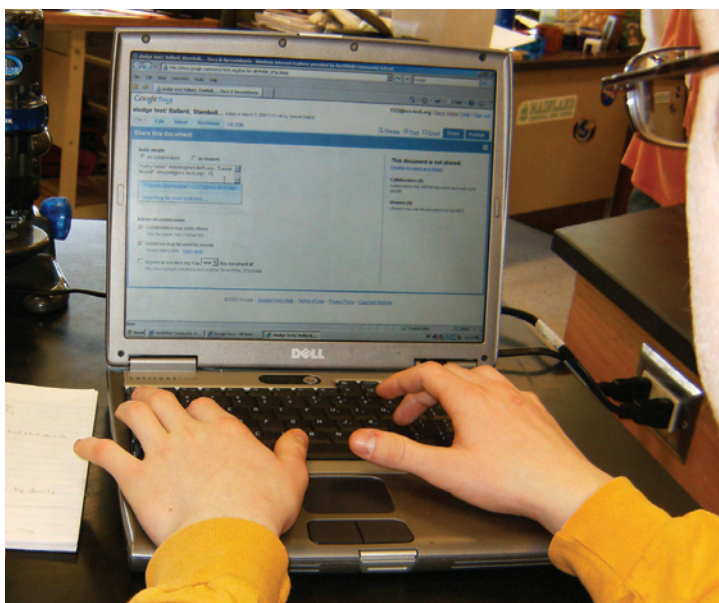
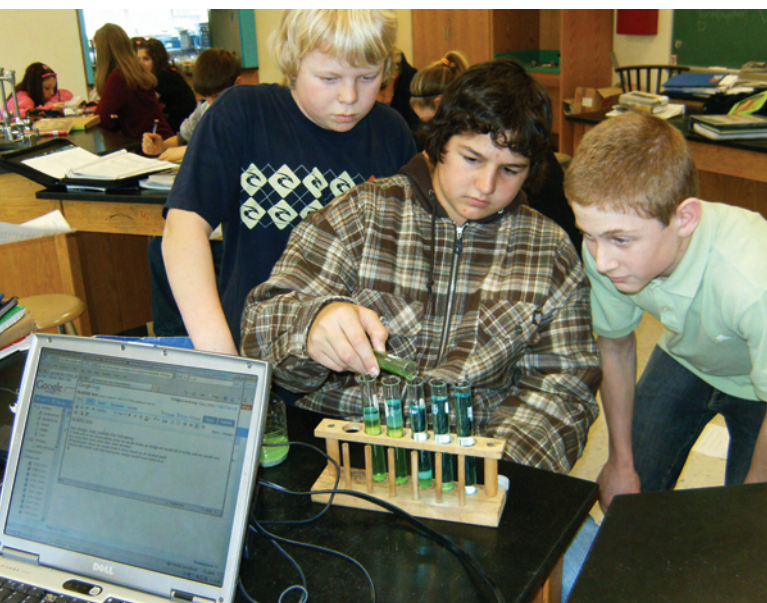
move files back and forth across computers. Users can interact, and they can add and delete information and comments on Web sites, which older Web tools wouldn't allow. "The use of Web 2.0 is all about information," Brooks-Young adds.

"Public education is about social net-

working and getting along with others," which comprise some of the 21st-century skill set, says Kevin Jarrett, technology facilitator at Northfield Community (N.J.) School District, which is just outside Atlantic City. Brooks-Young and Jarrett were among four experts who ►



## Web Tools: The Second Generation



*Eighth-graders of Northfield Community (N.J.) School District in Introductory Physical Science class examine specially created “sludge” that they must identify during a multiweek science project. Student teams use Google Docs at home and school to gather and analyze evidence and identify it.*

spoke during a recent Web 2.0 seminar by the Consortium for School Networking, touting the successes and uses of Web 2.0 in classrooms. While Brooks-Young agrees that many teachers and administrators are overwhelmed by pictures, music, video and blogs all on one Web page, as it’s “like learning how to speak multiple foreign languages,” it’s vital for school leaders to be “cognizant of the world the kids are in when they are not in school.”

Many Web 2.0 tools help students think critically and solve problems, which fall under the 21st-century skills. When Brooks-Young is hired to consult districts or groups of administrators and discuss digital leadership, she doesn’t teach them how to use the tools so much as she teaches them how they can keep up with the rapidly shifting landscape of digital tools. The best tip is “recognizing that change is no longer an option,” she says. “The world will continue to change, and we need to be willing to change to be open to new ideas.”

The second-generation tools are growing in popularity in schools, helping administrators and teachers organize their work and make curriculum connections with students who don’t know how

to communicate or simply live without computers and these social tools.

### The Pennsylvania Plan

Every five years in Pennsylvania, the state requires every school district to create a strategic plan. Connie Sitterley, director of instructional technology at PENNCREST School District in Saegertown, Pa., created the district’s technology plan two years ago that was based

2.0 tools in computer labs and on the one or two computers in each secondary classroom.

With the help of her 25-year-old daughter who works in the district’s technology department, Sitterley started seeing the beauty of Web 2.0. She started listening to educational podcasts and reading blogs, including those from educators Bob Sprankle, Vicki Davis and Wesley Fryer and from consultant David War-

## Her motto was that if technology was not supporting and enhancing the curriculum, then why bother having technology?

on goals and objectives in the district’s strategic plan. (“PENNCREST” stands for the four independent school districts that combined to create the district.) Her motto was that if technology was not supporting and enhancing the curriculum, then why bother having technology? Although the district is far from having one laptop for every student, one of Sitterley’s goals was to have students use Web

lick, and reviewing some online applications. In a district that covers 400 square miles and has three campuses, Sitterley says using technology to connect staff and students is vital.

### Tool and Technology Options

Sitterley calls her district’s programs “collaborative and generative technologies,” and included are such applications

## Steps to Collaboration

The single most important tip to using Web 2.0 tools in a public district is communication, according to Kevin Jarrett, technology facilitator at Northfield Community (N.J.) School District. “It’s really just as simple as talking to each other about how easily these tools can transform the classroom.”

The best environment is a “magical” one where teachers feel “empowered to experiment with new technologies and students are using those technologies in creative projects that were never possible before,” he says.

***Districts should follow these five guidelines:***

### 1. Set high administrative expectations.

“It’s all about leadership,” Jarrett says. When leaders can communicate their vision and can excite their staff, they get results. And creating a team that believes in the value of technology will help students easily assimilate into the 21st-century workforce, he says. Today’s students are “born collaborators,” so infusing curriculum into the mostly social world of Web 2.0 will excite students about school. “I saw it with my own eyes during our rollout of Google Applications,” he says.

### 2. Have an inclusive acceptable use policy.

Don’t get too wrapped up in the legalese, but design a policy that is easily understood. Then have it tested and enforce it consistently. The Northfield district’s AUP is “strategically succinct”—it covers as much area as it can but is specific enough to cover all forms of electronic communication, without referring to individual technologies. Clearly stated “implications and actions” eliminate all doubt regarding treatment of infractions, such as willfully circumventing firewalls or accessing blocked sites and files.

### 3. Facilitate team building.

Meetings that articulate expectations allow teachers to see and evaluate new tools where it counts—in small groups grounded in today’s teaching practice. When teachers see how easy it is to bring classrooms half a world away into their own, as teacher Lisa Parisi did with her “Comparing Hemispheres” project ([comparinghemispheres.wikispaces.com](http://comparinghemispheres.wikispaces.com)), they’ll often be compelled to try themselves. “It’s all about getting teachers excited about the results technology can make in their classrooms,” Jarrett says.

### 4. Identify and grow teacher leaders.

Where are your leaders? How can you assist them? How are you leveraging their success in the school and at teacher conferences? Such emerging leaders need your support to succeed and thrive. Supporting their innovative uses of technology benefits everyone in the district.

### 5. Streamline site approval/filtering processes.

Districts should create an efficient system to manage site blocking/unblocking requests and work to ensure teachers have easy access to the individual or individuals responsible for it. Last-minute unblocking requests are common, and IT staff can’t always drop everything to accommodate them. Teachers need to respect the need for a process, and the process needs to respect teachers’ need to deliver a lesson. And most of all, Jarrett adds, “you need to have the right staff as gate holders [of sites]. The right people understand the needs of teachers and, ideally, also understand the curriculum and the Web.”



as VoiceThread, Google Applications for Education, WordPress and Moodle. Elementary school students mostly use VoiceThread, which is an online media

album that can hold various media—like images, documents and videos—and allows users to make comments using voice, text, audio file or video and share

them with anyone they want. Students can use it to upload images, tell stories about the images and hear comments from others within the confines of the ►

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district, such as parents and other family members, Sitterley adds. Participants can type or speak their comments using a microphone or telephone, which transmit on the page next to various icons, such as flowers or faces, representing a person. With parental permission and according to guidelines for posting student work on the Web, the district can link VoiceThread and other student work to the school Web sites using WordPress, which is a semantic personal publishing platform.

A journalism high school teacher Sitterley knew was receptive to using the tools started with Google Apps for Education last fall. Within a couple of days, her students were sharing their calendar of projects and deadlines and were also able to see who was doing what story. Edits on stories are also shared, and the corresponding comments become public. In other words, the history of changes or edits on a particular story or project is etched in writing. The students can work collaboratively to write and edit their articles, and changes to the documents can be tracked using the revisions feature in Google Apps.

Chemistry and physics teachers have also used Google Apps for such projects as presentations, and some math teachers are using the spreadsheet.

Saving money was also part of the goal, as students in grades 7-12 had been using Microsoft fee-based e-mail. By using free Gmail, the district will save hundreds of dollars. And the new Web tools are compatible with students' home computers that don't necessarily have Microsoft-based products. "It helps with compatibility issues," between Microsoft and non-Microsoft software, Sitterley says.

A drawback of using this kind of tool could come if certain teachers feel that any type of collaboration, such as this, is cheating, Sitterley adds. But she hopes that teachers will join in the new learning wave and realize and accept that students naturally collaborate in the 21st century. For many students, this is how they learn.

### Concerns

Many of PENNCREST's Web 2.0 tools are protected, or limited to the district or the district's parents and grandparents, so they are safe from outside predators. Moodle is one such site where districts can

an environment like Moodle," she says. "It's teaching them how to work and play well with others."

Carol Anne McGuire, who teaches blind and visually impaired students in Orange Unified School District in Cali-

## "The world will continue to change, and we need to be willing to change to be open to new ideas."

—Susan Brooks-Young, Web 2.0 consultant

set up their own groups and blogs within the district server and have firewalls so no outsiders can get in, Brooks-Young says. "With really little kids, you want to have

fornia, created Rock Our World, a project in which students worldwide work together online to make movies, tell stories and compose music. Anyone who is set up in the project can view anyone's work on the site. "That's what I think is so exciting—the interchange of information," Brooks-Young says.

Jing, a new tool by TechSmith, captures images and live video from a computer. "It has a lot of potential as an instructional tool," she adds.

Sitterley adds that her Pennsylvania district complies with the Child Internet Protection Act (CIPA) but accepts various Web 2.0 tools for classroom use. If students accidentally find inappropriate photos or sites and report them to a teacher, they are acting responsibly. But if students share these sites with others, or repeatedly visit them, they are not complying with the acceptable use policy of the district. The idea is to "be respectful of yourself and of your teachers and fellow students," Sitterley says. And students need to learn to be responsible digital citizens as they interact with the tools and resources that Web 2.0 can provide, she adds.

Web 2.0 tools are in student hands now, and heavily used. It's up to school leaders to ensure they are infused in the curriculum to keep students engaged and excited about learning. **DA**

*Angela Pascopella is senior features editor.*

### RESOURCES

Airset  
[www.airset.com](http://www.airset.com)

Vicki Davis blog  
[coolcatteacher.blogspot.com](http://coolcatteacher.blogspot.com)

Google Apps for Education  
[www.google.com/a/help/intl/en/edu/index.html](http://www.google.com/a/help/intl/en/edu/index.html)

Jing  
[www.jingproject.com](http://www.jingproject.com)

Moodle  
[moodle.org](http://moodle.org)

SchoolTube  
[www.schooltube.com](http://www.schooltube.com)

Skype  
[www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com)

SlideShare  
[www.slideshare.net](http://www.slideshare.net)

Bob Sprankle blog  
[bobsprankle.com](http://bobsprankle.com)

VoiceThread  
[voicethread.com](http://voicethread.com)

David Warlick blog  
[davidwarlick.com/2cents](http://davidwarlick.com/2cents)  
Web blog of Wesley Fryer  
[www.speedofcreativity.org](http://www.speedofcreativity.org)

WordPress  
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